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Folklore: Yiddish Folktale
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Evaluating Khassidic Collections
Collections on Rabbi Yisroel Baal Sham Tov

Book I

1. Author: No specific author has been given for these tales. They have been "Masik Gevezh" -- collected from the old tales. Title: Sefer Shivkhey Habaal Shem Tov.
2. Published and financed by Reb Mordekhai Ben-Mokher and Avraham Dov-Bedfus Hangidim (in the printing house of the rich men).
1843 = Yasi Roonania
Compositors: Moyshe Zelig and Yehudi
3. Description of Volume: There are 64 pages - all are unnumbered. But at the bottom of each page is the first word of the next page.
4. There is no index, table of contents, introduction, annotation, or mention of sources. The pages are regular size.
5. Nature of Collected Materials: The materials collected are "a great thing to tell of the greatness, the virtues and fine qualities of the holy rabbi Rabbi Yisroel Baal Shem Tov of Medziboz, and of the awesome wonders done by him in this world so that we should know and believe that we have a God, a Lord of the Jews who can do miracles and wonders through his servants who worship him."

They are narratives. There is no way of knowing anything about sources, editing, or method of recording. The volume is in poor condition and should be micro-filmed.

Book II

1. Author: Gezaml't by Sh. Bastomski
Title: Yidishe Folksmayses un legendes
Vol. 1 - Legendes Veqn Besht
2. Publisher: Farlag: Di Naye Yidishe Fokshul Wilna, 1925.
3. Description of Volume: 100 pages. An introduction of three and a half pages is included therein.
4. There is no index or table of contents or numbering of tales (unless there are two of one tale). It is regular size.
5. Nature of Collected Materials: The collection took the materials from Muser Sforim., Sipuri Mayses for Women, Bal Darshns, Gute Yidn, Mochrey Sforim. He takes tales from the following books: Kahal Khassidim, Shifkhey Besht, Divrey Tsadikim, Der Baal Shem Tov - Merkvirdike Vunder Mayses and Sipurey Tsadikim Reb Yisroel Baal Shem Tov: Zayn Lebn, Lere un Virkn by Sh-Ts. Zetser some of Sh. Anskyz's tales retold Baal Shem Tov by I. Zanvil and anonymous collections.

5B. Treatment of Materials: The tales are straight narratives. There is no audience and no mention of editing. He has given us the tales in the "primitive folk tone."

He has only changed orthography, corrected errors, and put in punctuation.

5C. He does give titles for tales. Example: "Der Baal Shem Reb Odem Git Iber Reb Yisroel Besht Di Soydes Hatoreh," or "Dos Geburt for Desht."

6. Documentation: The Collection does not tell us which tales are from which source.

7. Supplementary Aids: There are no glossaries, no explanations of meanings of tales. Where there are two versions of one tale, there is no analysis or comparison.

8. Composition of Collection: A few tales are given in more than one version. Some tales are variants on tales originally about other tsadibeim, and then later connected with the Besht. All tales are about the Besht.

9. Arrangement of Collection: The collection is designed to show the "striving towards spiritual heroism!"

The tales are arranged in chronological order, and also according to themes such as "Khassidim un Misnagdim." "Nisim Unifloes" within the chronological framework.

Book III

1. Author: Put together (Tsunoif geshtelt) by Y. Opatoshu Fun Undzer Oytser: Mayses Fun Baal Shem Tov un Fun Zayne Noentste Talmidim.
2. Published by: Lyco Publishing, New York, 1957.
3. Description of Volume: It is a large sized book. There are 306 pages, included therein is a 19 page biography of the Besht, by Dr. Y. Tsenberg and a 4½ page introduction by Opatoshu. The only annotations are footnotes in the introduction and scattered word explanations and translations throughout the tales. There is a table of contents listing each tale but no index.
5. Nature of Collected Materials: The tales were taken from: two editions of Shivkhey Habesht, 1816 - primarily the Koretzer edition but also small portions from the Novidvorer edition (these tales were compiled by the Shokhet Dov Ben Shmuel of Linetz, the son-in-law of the Besht's sofer. Supplementary stories were taken from stories created in the nineteenth century and recorded in:
Sipurey Mayses, Warsaw, 1881
Kahal Khasidim, Lvov, 1875
Meyses Nifloes, Pietrekov
Lipurey Besht, Pietrekov
Gvurat Yisroel, Warsaw
Me-orot Haqdolim, Warsaw